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Rindge, Cong - Meeting House, 1797 - 1897

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Centennial Celebration

OF THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING-HOUSE

RINDGE, N. H.

January 11, 1897.

PETERBORO':
TRANSCRIPT OFFICE, JOHN SCOTT, PROPRIETOR.
1897.

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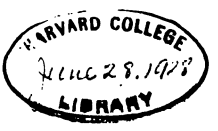

Congregational Church.
Photographed Jan. 1897.

PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS.

In response to word circulated among the people, the congregation met in the Vestry of the Congregational Church on the evening of Dec. 17, 1896. After the regular prayer meeting, the congregation resolved itself into a business meeting, with Rev. J. P. Richardson as moderator and H. W. Fletcher as clerk. The subject to be considered was the advisability of celebrating the centennial of the dedication of the present meeting-house on Jan. 11, 1897. The meeting voted to celebrate the occasion with afternoon and evening exercises and an intervening collation. The whole matter was committed into the hands of a general committee consisting of Rev. J. P. Richardson, Dea. H. E. Wetherbee, and Nathan A. Hale.

The general committee met, the next day, and appointed eight special committees. The appointments are here given, with one or two changes, caused by inability to serve.

Committee on Speakers :—Dea. H. E. Wetherbee, Mrs. O. D. Converse, A. F. Symonds.

Music:—Mrs. J. P. Richardson, Mrs. H. A. Stearns, M. L. Goddard.

Printing:—Mrs. Sarah R. H. Towns, Mrs. Clarence E. Towne, Emma E. Leighton.

Finance:—F. D. Converse, James H. Richardson.

Decorations: — Mrs. F. T. Wetherbee, Ella F. Brigham, Mrs. Otis H. Norcross.

Entertainment:—Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Emory, Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Fletcher.

Collation :—Mrs. M. W. Hale, Mrs. F. D. Converse, Mrs. H. W. Wellington.

Stabling:—A. M. Hale, F. L. Barrett, R. D. Converse.

All these committees served with enthusiasm and efficiency.

The committee on printing issued 400 invitations and sent them forth to friends outside the town, including sons and

daughters of Rindge. They also issued 600 programmes to be distributed at the celebration. The finance committee obtained from about fifty persons in town contributions of one dollar each. In addition to this and smaller amounts, Dea. W. A. Hale contributed two dollars; Mrs. Lucy Ramsdell, two dollars; Geo. H. Ingraham, five dollars; Ezra S. Stearns, ten dollars; Mary L. Ware, ten dollars; and Rodney Wallace, twenty-five dollars. These contributions proved sufficient, not only for meeting the expenses of the centennial, but for tuning the organ and for guaranteeing the publication of a centennial pamphlet. Incidental to the celebration was a gift from Marshall Wetherbee of fifty dollars in gold to go into the parish treasury.

THE CELEBRATION.

Monday, Jan. 11, 1897, was an exceptionally good day for the celebration. The weather was fair, and neither too cold nor too warm; the wheeling was better than might have been expected; and the evening was a moonlight one. Promptly at 2 o'clock, P. M. a congregation had assembled that nearly filled the spacious audience-room of the church. The exercises began with an organ prelude, "Gloria in Excelsis," by Mrs. R. E. Holgate. Rev. Dr. Foster read the 121st and 122d Psalms and offered prayer. Rev. A. C. Fay read the original hymn for 1797, and the last four stanzas were sung by the congregation. Then came the Address of Welcome by Dea. H. E. Wetherbee, followed by "Jesu, Lover of My Soul," sung by Miss Mabel Poland. The next in order was the historical address by the pastor, Rev. J. P. Richardson, and this was succeeded by "There's a Voice among the Angels," rendered by the quartette, Mrs. J. P. Richardson, Miss Eva A. Fletcher, Mrs. Holgate and Miss Poland. Rev. Frank G. Clark then stood forth as the only former pastor present. He told of the heroic struggles of the church with a debt, on which they were paying an annual interest of six hundred dollars. Again and again did they respond to his call to grapple with that great debt, till finally, under Pastor Riggs, they succeeded in cancelling it all. After Mr. Clark's address, considerable time was spent in listening to letters read by Mrs. Towne and Mrs. Towns of the committee on invitation or printing. Among these were three by former pastors. Pastor Dickerman wrote: "Precious memories will be recalled of those who have gone over the other side, and of changes that have occurred, in the nation and in the world, since your fathers and mothers dedicated your house to God. They have gone: kings and empires have passed away, but the church remains." Pastor Riggs wrote:—"There are many churches whose history has covered

a greater number of years than that of the Rindge church, but none whose record is more glorious, or that has been more faithful to the sacred and important trusts that have been committed to it. Two such pastorates as those of Doctors Payson and Burnham are enough to shed imperishable lustre upon any church organization. And when to these are added the names of other faithful men whose labors have been of briefer duration, but who have wrought with the same faithfulness and zeal according to the measure of their ability and opportunity, the hundred years furnish a history in which a people may take a pardonable pride." Pastor Merrill, in his letter, said:—"I have one of the first batch of shingles that ever covered the roof of the old church, which I preserve as a memento. Mr. Thomas Buswell informed me that it was on the church over fifty years, and, when it was shingled the second time, the best of the old shingles were culled out and put on a shed roof at his residence. I happened to be at his house when they were removing them, more than forty years afterwards, and secured one. It is quite sound except a little crumbling at the thick edge. The part which was exposed to the weather is worn to about half its original thickness, I suppose from the action of the water on the roof. The timbers in the roof I shall never forget. It is a good sign that the people cherish the old building in these days when there is so little reverence for the past." Hon. J. B. Walker sent the following:—"There are but few of the old time, two story meeting houses now to be found in the State. There is one at Jaffrey, one at Washington, one at Lyme, one at Henniker, one at Webster, one at Exeter, and perhaps a few others. These all speak of the period when we had Church and State in New Hampshire; when the people of an entire township went up together to their common sanctuary to worship. When kept in good condition, as yours has been, they attest the religious character and respectability of the generations which span the town's history. My grandfather, Judge Timothy Walker of Concord, repeatedly preached to the good people of Rindge in the years 1761 to 1764, inclusive, and was present when the former meeting-house was

raised on the 25th and 26th days of June, 1764, and received from them a call to the pastorate: the first, I think, extended by them to any one, and, so far as I know, the only one he ever received. Constraining reasons prevented its acceptance, and the disturbances which preceeded and accompanied the Revolution soon withdrew him to the duties of civil life and to a seat upon the judicial bench. The old Hingham, Mass., meeting-house was *two* hundred years old in 1881. That yours may be carefully guarded and stand indefinitely is my sincere hope." Rev. Dr. George L. Prentiss expressed his regrets thus:—"I have never been in Rindge; but the name for more than half a century has sounded to me almost as familiar and pleasant as that of my native town. The wife of my earliest pastor—a woman of rare loveliness and a dear friend of my mother—was a daughter of Rindge. And my wife (Elizabeth Prentiss),who was a granddaughter of Rindge, used to talk about the place as if she had been born there. I am sure, therefore, that no stranger could take part in the one hundredth anniversary of your meeting-house more heartily or more gratefully than I should. Nothing but midwinter and the infirmities of old age will keep me away." Rev. Dr. W. W. Rand, Secretary of the American Tract Society, responded thus by mail:—"I regret exceedingly that my duties here prevent my acceptance of your kind invitation. Memories of the venerable meeting-house, of the sightly parsonage where my grandfather Payson and his honored wife so long resided, and of the quiet farm-house some three miles off where my father was born, and where some of my vacations were passed, draw me powerfully; and it would refresh me greatly to revisit the old scenes, and to meet the very few who remember my parents. My mother, Grata Payson Rand, died in 1818, and no one living probably remembers her. My father, however, Rev. Asa Rand, died in 1871, and some may recollect him. I trust that Providence will smile on your celebration in honor of His own house, and that the exercises will strengthen all the heavenly influences that centre in the dear old church, and that its sacred pulpit will always be unswervingly loyal to the whole word of

God which it enshrines, and proclaim unaltered 'the faith once delivered to the saints.' May it be 'the house of God and the gate of heaven' to every soul that enters it!"

Another song by Miss Poland, entitled "Thou art near," closed the afternoon exercises.

A very enjoyable time was spent socially between the hours of 5 and 7, and a bountiful collation was served in the Town Hall for all in attendance at the meetings.

At 7 o'clock, the evening session began with an organ recital by Mrs. Holgate. At its conclusion, prayer was offered by Rev. Dighton Moses. After the prayer came the solo, "Fear ye not, O Israel," by Mrs. E. F. Wood. "Coronation" was also sung by the congregation, standing, while a fresh supply of air was being brought into the room. All was then ready for the sermon, which was preached by Rev. Dr. R. A. Beard of Nashua. His text was taken from 2 Sam. 22. 31:—"As for God, his way is perfect." Subject:—The perfect way of God. Said the preacher:—"The attribute of perfection belongs to absolutely nothing that is man made. Everything that comes from the hand of God, on the other hand, is absolutely perfect." God's perfect way in nature was illustrated from mosses, from the branching of trees, from oxides, and from Italian sunsets. His perfect way in grace was shown forth in Christ's treatment of Peter, the 'capital sinner of the New Testament." It was a gospel sermon and calculated to lead souls unto God.

Dr. Beard prefaced his sermon by saying:—"This is holy ground. I suppose there is no spot in New Hampshire whence has gone forth a more noble band of men and women. What is it that has made this one hundred years so fruitful? It is because you have had the Gospel preached to you: it is this that has made these men and women so illustrious."

At the close of the sermon, Mrs. Wood sang another selection; and opportunity was then given for remarks from any one in the audience.

First to respond, was H. Porter Smith of Cambridge. He spoke from the standpoint of summer boarder and minister's

son. In the former capacity, he had enjoyed Rindge and her church very much. In the latter capacity, he told how the ministers had impressed him, in his younger years, when they came to exchange pulpits with his father. Dr. Burnham's true measure was not the smallness of his body, but the greatness of his mind and soul. As Watts expressed it :—

"Were I so tall to reach the pole
And grasp the ocean in my span,
I must be measured by my soul,
The mind 's the standard of the man."

Rev. F. B. Burrows, of the Congregational Record and New Hampshire Journal, had a word of congratulation for the people of Rindge, a word of cheer for a country church, and a word of recommendation for the religious newspaper. Mr. Marshall Wetherbee, in his eightieth year, indulged in reminiscences of his boyhood, how he used to go to church, four miles, barefoot, carrying his shoes in his hand and getting back home again about sunset. It pained him now to come to the Rindge church and see the vacant pews. He made it a point, in his livery stable business, never to keep two horses and carriages when one horse and carriage would suffice. And so, he pleaded for such a concentration of forces in town as should lead to a filling up of the pews. Revs. A. G. Smith and G. H. Hardy, pastor and ex-pastor of the M. E. church at West Rindge, made brief remarks, and so did Revs. Fay and Moses, pastors of the Congregational Churches at Fitzwilliam and Troy. Our invalid deacon, Omar D. Converse, was able to be present and to enjoy the exercises; but the voice that once would be heard on such occasions, sank, several years ago, to a whisper. His son, Dea. Irving O. Converse of the "C. C." church, Fitchburg, spoke of the success of the centennial and paid a tribute of praise to the committees and to all who had had any part in the work. The speaking closed with additional remarks by Dea. W. A. Hale and Mr. A. F. Symonds.

The pastor, who had presided through the exercises, then read the original hymn for 1897, written by Mrs. Martha J. Heywood, Dr. Burnham's daughter. Four stanzas were sung, and the benediction was pronounced by Rev. A. C. Fay.

J. P. R.

ADDRESS OF WELCOME.

By Deacon Herbert E. Wetherbee.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—Dear friends:—It is with great pleasure that I come before you on this occasion to extend a few words of welcome. What a grand and noble object has brought us together. It is, as you know, to celebrate the centennial of the dedication of this house of God. Now, although this house was built by the town, it must have been a great undertaking for our forefathers to have reared such a structure, and I believe that many of them were actuated in this grand enterprise, not from a sense of duty, or compulsion, merely, but by that which was higher and nobler, even a *love* for the cause of the blessed Master, also a desire that a large and commodious house might be erected in which the gospel might be preached, that would not only be a spiritual benefit to them and the generation which they represented, but to the generations which might follow. I feel that our hearts should go out in praise and thanksgiving to God, not only that we are permitted to gather here today under so favorable circumstances, but that this house has been preserved until the present time. It has stood, like a house built upon a rock, and withstood the storms and winds of a century. Yea! has stood like a beacon light, its spire pointing high toward the heavens above.

And now in behalf of the Congregational parish of this town I extend to you a most cordial welcome to this house of God, and especially to this room, *this sacred room.* Yea, this room where the gospel has been preached during all these years; where the grandest story ever told to mortal beings has been repeated over and over again, and by some of the most devoted servants of God. Although some of them have gone to their reward, yet we think of them as of him who "being dead yet speaketh." No doubt there are those in this audience who recall many tender, and loving words which fell from the lips of the beloved Dr.

Burnham, as he stood in this sacred desk. To every one present this house is more or less dear, and especially so to you who have been personally associated with it by sacred attachments and hallowed memories. To this house some of you have come, where the last sad rites have been paid to the memory of your dear ones; and here have you looked for the last time upon the loved forms, and implanted a kiss upon their cold brow, ere they were conveyed to yonder cemetery. Doubtless there are those here today who well remember the time when you were led by a loving mother's hand into these pews, that you might early learn to reverence God's house, and hear the blessed tidings of salvation to man. And here some of you were brought to realize the importance, yea, the truth, of the words of the dear Savior to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I say unto thee, ye must be born again." And you heard the blessed invitation, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." Yes! and here did you answer aright the greatest question of all your life—the one which concerned not only your present but eternal interests—and resolved to live, henceforth to honor the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," and came forward before this altar, and in the presence of God, angels, and men, you avouched the "Lord Jehovah" to be your "Sovereign Lord and chief good," and went forth in the strength of God, to do His blessed will.

It is with great pleasure we welcome you who are with us today, who are, or have been, closely connected by kindred ties to the pastors who once had the charge of this church and congregation. To you this house must be very dear, as you call to mind those dear men of God who loved it so well, and who so faithfully labored for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom.

We are very happy to have you with us today who were once the shepherds over this parish. We remember well your faithfulness to those under your charge, and the great interest you always manifested in the building up of all that was good and noble, especially in the spiritual welfare of the people, and that those who had not might come to the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." May heaven's richest

blessing rest upon you. We believe the seed which you so faithfully sowed here will bear more and more fruit, and may your seed-sowing in other fields bear abundant fruit, to the honor and glory of God.

To you who have occupied this pulpit by way of exchange or supply, we would say, that your earnest prayers and words of sympathy and interest will ever be held in grateful remembrance.

It is also very pleasant to have with us those who are comparative strangers, and we thank you for the effort you have made to join with us in celebrating the centennial of the dedication of this house, and doubt not that you are interested in other church edifices and the same grand cause which has incited so many to gather here during the past century. Again, we bid you welcome to this ancient house of our fathers, with all its hallowed memories, and also to the interesting programme which has been carefully prepared for this occasion. We trust that as you listen to that which may be spoken, or sung, you will feel that this is none other "but the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven." Would not this century-old house, could it but speak, echo and re-echo the word "Welcome," which hangs so beautifully suspended in evergreen before you? And the bell which hangs in the belfry joins with its musical tone in extending you a hearty welcome. How, to many of us, as we were wending our way to this house of God, on a clear and bright Sabbath morn, has our eye turned to the bell, swinging to and fro, while it seemed to ring out in clear tones, "Come! Come!" Today, as it has been ringing out in the same sweet tones, it not only seemed to say "Come!" but "Welcome! Welcome!"

And now in closing, I will extend to you an invitation to visit our dear old parsonage on the hill. It was the home of the Rev. Dr. Seth Payson and the birthplace of the celebrated Dr. Edward Payson and his brother, Rev. Phillips Payson; and the home for nearly half a century of the beloved Dr. Burnham and his devoted, Christian wife, where their five children were born and reared; also, the home of many others, whose names are

Congregational Parsonage.

worthy of honorable mention. I was about to speak of it as a sacred house, for as we pause a moment and try to realize the great number of sermons which have been written there, and the many earnest, sincere prayers which have ascended to the hearer and answer of prayers for the spiritual welfare of immortal souls, well might it be called a *sacred* place. You may be sure that our dear pastor and wife would receive you cordially.

Finally, we would extend to you a welcome to the homes and hearts of this people, trusting that we all may receive from this occasion new incentives to more closely follow the teachings of the Master, as we enter upon another century. And may each of us so act and live, that when we are called to give up this earthly life, we may be permitted to enter the " House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens," and not only to hear the words, "Well done," from the blessed Master, but also to receive the sweet welcome into the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

HISTORICAL ADDRESS.

By the Pastor, Rev. J. P. Richardson.

One hundred years ago today, this house of worship in which we are assembled, was dedicated. We may now enter it upon the list of those Congregational meeting-houses, still used as such, that have been in the Lord's service for the full, round period of a century. It is no strange thing that we wish to celebrate an event like this. Have you thought, my hearers, that it is only a small part of our great country in which a centennial like our *can* be celebrated? Draw a line around New England and New York, and you have within that line all these ancient structures. Outside and beyond, the vast areas stretch away southward to the Gulf of Mexico and westward to the Pacific Ocean, and these are dotted over with churches of our denomination amounting to many hundreds; but, not one of them is worshipping in a house that has attained unto the venerable age of this one at Rindge Centre.

Looking now at the space within the line enclosing New England and New York, you discover a few things of interest.

One is, that New Hampshire is the banner state for unabandoned Congregational meeting-houses one hundred years old. Reckoning proportionally, you find that Rhode Island has none of this description; that New York has one centennial in every 79 meeting-houses; Vermont, one in 63; Maine, one in 34; Connecticut, one in 22; Massachusetts, one in 20; and New Hampshire, one in 13. Our own State thus leads all other States in the comparative number of Congregational church buildings, still used as such, as old as the one in which we meet today.

Considering next, not the number, but the worth of these centennial buildings, you make another happy discovery. It is, that New Hampshire stands next to the head in this regard. New York is at the foot, with an average church value of over

$2,000; Vermont, $3,000; Maine, over $5,000; Massachusetts, over $6,000; New Hampshire, over $7,000; and Connecticut, over $9,000. Yielding the banner, this time, to Connecticut, New Hampshire is content to be second only to her.

A new distinction is to be accorded the Rindge sanctuary, as she crosses the one hundred year line. Hitherto, she has been one of New Hampshire's 180 Congregational churches. Now she is one of her 14 centennial churches. She can thus share in the honor which New Hampshire achieves by being the banner State in one particular, and next to the banner State in another. But, while she shares in that honor, she will not subtract from it. Instead of that, she adds another centennial church, and a church of more than the average value.

This edifice, which we honor today with our celebration, is not the only Congregational church that Rindge has ever had. There was another one previous to this; and that other, if it were standing today, would be more than 130 years old.

Of the old first church, little need be said and, possibly, little *can* be said. As to location, it was here at the exact centre of the town, on the twenty-acre lot reserved for it, and on almost the very same spot as is occupied by this, the second church. It was a much smaller building than this. Some idea of its size may be gained by comparing it with our present Centre school-house, it being only two feet longer and seven feet broader than the school-house. It had no steeple, the usual index of a church. And it was built for the town at the expense of those who were then the proprietors of the town.

It is interesting to learn that the Rindge first church, built in 1764, was good enough to be taken as a model, in certain respects, for the Jaffrey first church, built in 1774. The following is an item in the Jaffrey records:

"Voted that the Fraim be well underpined with good stone and lime, and the outside all well Completed and Collored like Rindge meeting house, and lower floor lead Duble, and pulpit like that in Rindge meeting-house."

The mission of our first church, however, was but transient. It was not built large enough nor convenient enough to serve the needs of the people for a hundred years as this has done.

As for room, there might have been a plenty of it when the population was less than 300; but when the number rose to more than 1,100, we can see the necessity for a new house of worship.

It was in 1794 that the movement to build a new church really got under way. Pastor Payson, two years before, had tried to start the enterprise by offering a bell, if the people would build within a specified time. The town thanked him for his generous offer, but they were too slow to avail themselves of it. They waited till they had taken a good long time to think about it, and then, at last, they undertook the work of erecting a second temple for the Lord. It was just about the same, you see, over in Jerusalem and here in Rindge. Whether Prophet Haggai or Pastor Payson urged the people on, they were ready to say :—"The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." But, a better spirit, by-and-by, took possession of them, and they addressed themselves to the work so long delayed.

"How firm a foundation!" Such is the natural exclamation of any one who examines the rocky hill on which this house is built. "And what a firm superstructure, too!" he must add, as he views the massive timbers cut from the forest primeval and put into its wonderfully solid framework. No wonder that this house of the Lord has been able to stand up against the wear and tear of the elements through a single century. For all that we can see, it can endure the strain of another century and, perhaps, many centuries to come. All honor, then, to the builders who, though they built slowly, yet built surely a structure so abiding.

Although the new church was built much larger than the old one, yet it did not have the stately and symmetrical appearance which it now possesses. The steeple was higher, it is true, but its base descended to the ground in quadrangular form and stood forth in bold relief at the western end of the church. This western end was thus made irregular, and so was the eastern end, where a porch was built on to the exterior.

The rugged looking meeting-house with its lofty spire, some twelve feet higher than now, is said to have made a profound impression upon the passers-by. And this is the rhyme they formed concerning it:

"A big church and a tall steeple,
A proud heart and a poor people."

Let us now, in imagination, make a visit to the church as it was when it was turned over to the town by the contractors, the Barker Brothers of Rindge. Arriving at the church, we decide to enter at the front door. This we find on the south side, where now we enter the vestry and the town hall. Standing in the doorway, we look around and the first thought we take in, is that the entire interior of the building has been utilized for an audience room. The dimensions of the building are 66 by 52 feet, and every square foot of the inner space is given to the room for preaching, and so is every cubic foot to the one ceiling overhead. Directly in front of us, on the north side of the house, is the red pulpit away up in the air and shut in all around, so that you would hardly know whether there was a minister in it, till he rose to read, or preach, or pray. A broad aisle leads from the south entrance directly up to the pulpit at the north. There are two long aisles parallel with the broad aisle, and these turn and meet it beyond the front pews. The pews are of the short, square kind with seats on three sides, turning on hinges so as to be raised or dropped for the convenience of the worshipper. On account of the shortness of the pews, it takes four of them to reach from aisle to aisle. Now comes the problem:—With four pews in a row and only two of them opening into the long aisles, how are you going to reach the interior ones? This problem is solved by making two more aisles between the long aisles and running up to the front row of pews. On the farther sides of the aisles nearest the walls, are the wall pews. These are a step higher than the body pews, thus furnishing a better outlook and leading some, perhaps, to consider them as the most desirable of all.

Looking up now, in the old audience room, you see that there are galleries extending around on three sides, east, south, and

west. The south gallery has a place for the choir. The east and west galleries have the entrances from outside.

Passing around from the front door at the south, we enter the porch at the east. A lower door opens the way to the east aisle, whence we can get to any part of the lower floor. A stairway in the porch takes us to an upper door, and this leads into the east gallery, and from here we can find our way to any part of the gallery.

Corresponding to the entrance at the east, is the entrance at the west. The projection there, under the steeple, serves as a porch from which we can get to the lower floor or to the gallery, according as we desire.

It is noticeable that the pulpit, when the church was built, was at the side, rather than at either end of the house. This arrangement would spread the congregation out broadly before the minister. To him it would be a congregation of breadth more than of depth.

Such was the building as it was built in 1796 and dedicated Jan. 11, 1797. At the dedication, Pastor Payson preached the sermon and an original hymn was sung, a hymn which we sing today.

The question now arises:—To what was this house dedicated? The answer is found in considering what it was. It was a *town* house. The town owned it and the town used it sometimes, as on the Sabbath, for religious purposes and sometimes for civil purposes. One day, the people would come to the one room in it to worship; another day, the men would come to the same room to vote. The voting would be preceded by prayer, as it has been, indeed, down to the present time; but, after all, the use to which the room would be put on town meeting and election days, would be called civil, rather than religious. We are now prepared for the question:—To what was this house dedicated? As a church, it was dedicated to the worship of God; as a town hall, it was dedicated to the service of the town, the State and the Federal Union.

This state of things was mixed; and it became more mixed when, in 1820, the Congregational society was formed. Here

was a new corporation qualified to do just what the town had been doing. The town had been taxing the people for the support of preaching; now the society could do that. The town had been attending to the church's necessities and comforts; now the society could do that. Both the town and the society soon saw that two administrators were embarrassing and that two administrators were useless. One or the other must retire and give the whole matter up to the other.

It was the town that did the retiring. She began by laying off the assessments for preaching upon the shoulders of the society. As to some other matters, she hesitated long; and it was many years before she gave up altogether her intimate relationship with the church. At last, there was a proposition made to separate, each to go to a different part of the building. The proposition was accepted by both of the parties. The town chose to remain on the ground floor and to take the eastern half with as much more as should reach to the farther side of the broad aisle. Of course, the church could not worship on less than half of the ground floor. So a new floor was laid and the building was remodelled on the plan of having the auditorium in the second story. With this, came some external changes:—a change of front from the south side to the west end; an enlargement of the front by bringing forward the corners; and a reduction of the height of the steeple by twelve feet. The porch at the east was also taken away.

We have now reached the year 1839, a year which marks a transition in the church's history, inasmuch as then the congregation moves from its old quarters and takes up its abode in the new. First, we will say, comes the minister, Pastor Burnham. He enters one of those doorways at the west end of this room, and then, instead of coming over to this end, as the present pastor does, he goes into his pulpit there between the doorways. Next comes the congregation up the inclined plane, turning into pews no longer square, then sitting facing the doors and facing the minister. Last comes the choir in goodly force; and, as the minister is at that end, the choir advances

to this end of the church and occupies a position several degrees higher than the congregation.

Of course, there was a re-dedication. It occurred on Christmas day. Pastor Burnham preached from Ezra v. 11:—"We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago."

The "many years ago," as it applied to *this* house, would be from 1839 back to 1797. That we will now call the *old* period of the church; from 1839 to 1872, the *middle* period; and from 1872 to the present time, the *new* period. The old period was the time spent down stairs; the middle period, up stairs, the congregation facing the west; the new period, up stairs still, the congregation facing the east.

In facing the east, the congregation would face, as now, the minister, the choir, and the new pipe organ. A very great work accompanied this change. An extension was built on for the organ; the inclined floor was made horizontal; the pews were turned around; there was plastering, frescoing, and painting; new windows, new pulpit, new carpet, and new cushions; and a new method of heating the house by furnaces. Besides this work for the audience room, there was good work done in the halls and the vestry; the north side of the roof was shingled; and the outside of the house was painted.

Then there was another re-dedication. It was early in 1872. Acting Pastor Powers preached the sermon. As the great organ was, this time, to be dedicated, it was fitting that the music should form a prominent part. A distinguished organist and a soloist helped to make the occasion memorable.

We will now notice a few gifts that were received in this, the new period of the church.

At a meeting of the society, March 23, 1872:—"Resolved—That this society gratefully accept the elegant chandelier presented by Col. Geo. W. Stearns for the audience room; also, the beautiful Bible and pair of Hymn Books presented by Rodney Wallace, Esq., of Fitchburg, Mass., for the Pulpit."

At the communion season, January 6, 1878, the following was adopted:—"Whereas this church received the gift of a val-

Rev. A. W. Burnham, D. D.

Mrs. A. W. Burnham.

uable and complete Communion Service from Miss Submit Ball, for many years a respected and beloved member of this church; therefore, resolved that the appreciative thanks of this church be extended to Miss Ball for her beautiful and costly gift, and for her considerate and thoughtful remembrance of those with whom she was so long associated."

A gift greatly esteemed is that of the two large pictures of Dr. and Mrs. Burnham, presented by daughter and daughter-in-law; also, the smaller picture of Samuel Burnham, the son.

The loftiest gift is that in the belfry, *viz.*: the town clock. Six hundred dollars was bequeathed for this by Brother Otis Hubbard. He dying at the age of 91 and his sister, Mersylvia, at the age of 95 gave to the society one thousand dollars each.

We will make no further particular mention of gifts received. Suffice it to say that the list is long. Noble contributions of money have been made by friends outside our midst, and they have helped the society to tide over serious financial difficulties.

It is natural for us today to think of the changes wrought in one hundred years. Let us consider such as have some relation to this house of worship whose centennial we are celebrating.

In what we have called the old period of the church, the sanctuary services were altogether in the daytime. It could not well be otherwise; for, how far would a few candles go towards lighting up a great meeting-house? Accordingly, the Sabbath meetings were held in the forenoon and afternoon, and the mid-week meeting Thursday afternoon.

Many, Sabbath morning, left their homes for church to stay all day. They carried a lunch with them, and the lunch probably satisfied them just as well as a hot and elaborate dinner. There would be ample opportunity to eat between the two services, inasmuch as there was no Sabbath School, in these parts, one hundred years ago.

Each of the services was long. The prayer and the sermon were both long. In this new period of the church we would call them *very* long. But, they were expected to be such in

those days; and anything like the reduction in length now would be wholly out of favor.

During the prayer, the people stood. In order to stand comfortably, they turned up the seats on their hinges and held on to the pews for support. If unable to keep on their feet for so long a time, they sat down in the midst of the prayer, but rose, so as to be found in proper form at its close. The older people well remember what a clatter there was when the seats were dropped again.

Written requests for prayers were common in those days. After a bereavement, the minister would read some such notice as this: "Mr. Smith and family ask the prayers of the church that the death of one of their number may be sanctified to them for their spiritual good." Prayers for the sick would, also, be solicited.

As for the sermons, they were more formal and doctrinal than in the new period of the church. Every sermon would be like a great tree. The subject would be the trunk; the main divisions, the branches; and the sub-divisions the twigs growing out from the branches. Such a style might become mechanical, after a time; but, there would be this good thing about it, it would prevent all rambling talk and discussion and keep the sermon right to the point from the beginning to the end. In the matter of doctrine, our theological seminaries had not yet got started at the close of the last century, but any minister like Dr. Seth Payson would be a theological seminary in himself. He would constitute the faculty; and his congregation the students. Every Sabbath, the people would want some theological food, some doctrinal nut cracked then and there or to be cracked by them after reaching home. It is safe to say that they would welcome such themes as—

In Adam's fall,
We sinnéd all;

original sin; total depravity; the theory of the atonement; justification by faith; santification; perseverance of the saints; the last judgment; the eternal rewards of the righteous and the everlasting punishment of the wicked. In the new period of

the church, we do not make so much of doctrines as such; but, we trust we are faithful in the application of all Bible truth to our needs in this life and with a view to the eternity beyond. If we do this, we are doing our duty, whether our sermons can be technically called doctrinal or not.

For about twenty years after this house was built, there was no church bell. When, at last, it was purchased, and hung, and rung, Dr. Payson preached from the very appropriate text:— "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." The old time custom of ringing the bell at noon and at 9 o'clock in the evening was perpetuated until a year or two ago, when the town clock began to strike out the hours which had been rung out before.

The good people of 1797 went without a stove longer than they went without a bell. There they would sit in church, bravely enduring a freezing temperature sometimes, and laying the foundation, as some think, for old fashioned consumption. To make it a little more comfortable, some would bring foot-stoves containing a few hot coals and ashes. At noon they could go out to the neighbors and get a fresh supply of this kind of heat. It was handy to have neighbors at the Centre then.

The stove in the audience room below was put front of the pulpit, perhaps with the idea of keeping the minister and the deacons warm, if no one else. It was a great work for one stove to warm so great a room. I asked our oldest member if the stove did much good. "O, yes," she replied; "we could *smell* it, and that did lots of good."

From such changes, let us turn now and see about any changes of a moral nature. Have there been any such changes? Yes, I think there have.

The men of the old period of the church we are apt to think of as strictly correct in everything. Well, they were strict in some things, but not in everything. They certainly were very strict in the matter of keeping the 3d Commandment. Profanity they regarded as a most serious offense. It was not only a sin, but a crime. There was a law of God against it, and there

was a law of the State, as well. And if need be, they were in favor of having both laws enforced.

Then, too, they were very strict in the matter of keeping the 4th Commandment. Sabbath-breaking they frowned upon. Did not God say:—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?" And did not the State say the same? Then why should any one keep the day in an unholy manner, absenting himself from church, attending to things that ought not to come into the Sabbath, and devoting himself to worldly business or worldly pleasures on that day?

All honor to the fathers for the staunch attitude they took against both these evils of profanity and Sabbath-breaking!

But, while they were so strict against one brace of evils, they were not strict enough against another. I mean, for one thing, the use of intoxicants. It makes one blush with shame that the timbers of this consecrated building were not raised without a liberal use of rum. Make all the allowances for this act that you please; say that the rum was no such vile liquor as that of the present day; say, too, that it was in accordance with the custom of the times to have it at a raising; still of each of the fathers it could be asked:—"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?" Surely they had the Bible, and that condemns the use of intoxicants in no uncertain tone.

And what does this mean? I could hardly believe my eyes, as I read the original subscription paper signed by twenty-five men, among them leading citizens of the town. It reads as follows:

"We, the subscribers, promise to pay the several sums annexed to our names for the purchase of tickets in the seventh Class of Dartmouth College Lottery, which has commenced drawing and will be continued until finished. And it is agreed by the subscribers that each one shall receive of the monies which said tickets may draw in proportion to the amount which he shall subscribe for the purchase of said tickets."

It seems from this that the fathers did not shrink from identifying themselves with that which bore the name of "lottery." There was a strong temptation to do this; for it was a *college* lottery. An air of respectability was thus thrown around it. And later, still greater respectability was thrown around it

when there were *church* lotteries. But, the principle is the same, whether it be a college lottery, or church lottery, or the notorious Louisiana lottery. No one can now afford to have anything to do with that which bears the name of lottery.

I speak of these things not to condemn, or even to criticise, the fathers, but simply to mark some changes that have occurred. The changes have not all been in one direction. Some of them have certainly not been in our favor, but others have. Total abstinence, prohibition, and the anti-lottery sentiment, have met with a wonderful gain.

An historical address would be incomplete without some notice of the pastors. I will name them in consecutive order, making no distinction between those who were installed and those who were not:

Rev. Seth Dean, from 1765 to 1780, fifteen years.

Rev. Seth Payson, D. D., from 1781 to 1820, thirty-nine years.

Rev. Amos W. Burnham, D. D., from 1821 to 1867, forty-six years.

Rev. Lysander Dickerman, from 1867 to 1868, one year.

Rev. Dennis Powers, from 1869 to 1872, three years.

Rev. Frank G. Clark, from 1873 to 1879, six years.

Rev. Ezra J. Riggs, from 1879 to 1882, three years.

Rev. Richard T. Wilton, from 1884 to 1887, three years.

Rev. John L. Merrill, from 1887 to 1891, four years.

Rev. John P. Richardson, from 1891 to present time.

The first three pastorates were the longest, being respectively 15, 39, and 46 years; and their sum just 100 years. Dr. Burnham's was the most extended, 46 years. His fortieth anniversary was celebrated Nov. 14, 1861. The whole day was given up to it, the forenoon exercises being in this audience room, as it was when the pews faced the other way, and afternoon and evening exercises being in the town hall. It was a very notable occasion. Pastors Dean, Payson, Burnham and Powers, have finished their course and gone home to their reward.

As I have named the pastors, so I will now name the deacons. I am helped to do this, as I have been helped at so

many points along the way, by our town historian, Ezra S. Stearns, Secretary of State.

In the Presbyterian Church, they have the saying: —"Once an elder, always an elder." In the Rindge Congregational church, we might say:—Once a deacon, always a deacon. Continuance in that office remains till death or removal from town.

It seems that the church has had seventeen deacons. These are their names:

John Lovejoy, Josiah Ingalls, Francis Towne, Edward Jewett, Eleazer, Blake, David Barker, Hezekiah Hubbard, Ebenezer Brown, Benjamin Eddy, Adin Cummings, Luther Goddard, Joseph B. Breed, Omar D. Converse, Jeremiah Norcross, Herbert E. Wetherbee, Walter H. Aldrich, Walter A. Hale.

Besides the pastors and the deacons, there is another body of men whom I will mention; and that is the men that Rindge has raised up for the ministry.

We will begin the list with the two Payson brothers, Edward and Phillips, sons of the Pastor of this church. Edward was thirteen years old when this meeting-house was dedicated, and Phillips was one year old. Their mother was Grata Payson, a woman of deep piety. Her closet of prayer may be shown at the parsonage. She was also a writer of religious poetry; and the original hymn sung at the dedication in 1797, may well be ascribed to her. *Edward* Payson's career was not long, but it was heavenly and glorious. He lived a life of fasting and prayer, and his one thought seemed to be how he might glorify God on all occasions. In answer to this, God manifested His glory in the conversion of a multitude of souls. Dr. Edward Payson never had but one pastorate, and that was in Portland, Maine. He began it at the age of 24, and he closed it with his death at the age of 44. Of his eight children, none of his sons entered the ministry; but, two daughters became the wives of ministers. One of these was Elizabeth, known to the world as Elizabeth Prentiss. *Phillips* Payson was an Andover graduate and then a home missionary in New York. For seven years, he was pastor at Leominster, Mass.; and for three more, at Hamburg, Ct. He died in Nova Scotia at the age of 60.

Three of his sons became ministers, two of whom are now living, and they have been invited to our centennial as grandsons of Rindge.

Next to the Payson brothers, belongs the name of Asa Rand, inasmuch as he was their brother-in-law. He said here in 1861 :—" I was born in this town. My feet were early led to trudge three miles over these hills, to and from this house of God. I toiled upon a rugged farm to the age of 19. Then I went abroad to acquire an education for the ministry. My pastoral labors were bestowed on a beloved people in Maine during fourteen years. My next thirteen years were devoted principally to editorial labors. Regaining health, I returned to the pulpit, preaching during the nineteen years succeeding. For the six years past, I have lived retired from public labors, waiting for my final summons to depart." That was in 1861. He died at Ashburnham in 1871, aged 88. His son, Rev. Dr. W. W. Rand, Secretary of the American Tract Society, has written a letter to be read here today.

In that same eventful year of 1783, when Edward Payson and Asa Rand were born, Isaac Kimball was also born. This man was a Baptist. He studied at Brown University; was pastor for a year at Marblehead, Mass.; and was a missionary for the rest of his life. The rest of his life was not long, however; for, he died at the age of 45. His eldest son followed his father's example and became a minister.

Silas Wilder was eight years old when this house was dedicated. He graduated at Dartmouth college and studied divinity with Dr. Barstow of Keene. For four years, he was pastor of the Congregational church at Lewis, N. Y. After a few more years of preaching, he removed to Herkimer, N. Y., and there lived and died a farmer. His years were 77.

Another son in the ministry was Charles Walker, born, like Phillips Payson, in 1795. He studied at Dartmouth and Andover. Then followed a pastorate at New Ipswich, eight years; at Windsor, Ct., one year; at Medfield, Mass., one year; and at Wells, Maine, five years. After spending a winter in Italy, he came to Groton, Mass., where he died, aged 51.

Five years after this church was dedicated, Charles Shedd was born. Like Rand, and Wilder, and Walker, he was a Dartmouth man. Fifteen years were spent in teaching;—eight years at Kimball Union Academy, Meriden, and seven years at Appleton Academy, New Ipswich. Then he was ordained pastor at Campton, and served there fifteen years.

William C. Richards was not a native of Rindge; but, he came here when he was eleven years old and the town adopted him. Like Kimball, he was a Baptist and Brown University student. He had pastorates in Grafton, Lynn, and Newton, Mass. He was a hale old man at the age of 86, and he preached acceptably that year.

As there were two Payson brothers in the ministry, so there were three Perry brothers. These were John Philander, Albert, and Isaac Stearns Perry. *John Philander* studied at Dartmouth. He took his divinity course with Pastor Lee of New Ipswich and with our own Dr. Burnham. He began as a Congregational preacher at Surry, N. H., and at Ludlow, Vt. Then he was ordained in Boston as a Swedenborgian minister and settled at Yarmouth Port, Mass. *Albert* studied at Andover Seminary. He had one pastorate of four years at Stoughton, Mass. He died in New Ipswich at the age of 41.

We will add one more name to the ranks of the regular ministry. This is Albert F. Norcross, son of Deacon Norcross. He was a graduate at Dartmouth and Andover. In his short life of forty years, he had three pastorates :—one at Shirley, Mass., three years; another at Rockport, Mass., six years; and another broken off by his death at Sherburne, N. Y., after two years. From personal acquaintance I can say of him that he was a devoted servant of the Lord.

These twelve men in the regular ministry, all but one or two of them natives of Rindge, have gone forth from the town as apostles of the Lord Jesus. At this centennial celebration, we may well take satisfaction in a record like that.

But, there is a little more to be added to the record. Besides the regular ministry, there were a few more who did something of the same work, only they were not regulars.

There were John Coffeen, for example, and Luke, his son. After their removal from Rindge, the father did some preaching, and the son was licensed to preach.

There, too, was Dea. Benjamin Kingsbury of Walpole, Mass. He was a resident here one hundred years ago, and he died here at the age of 85. Late in life he studied divinity and went about in New Hampshire and Vermont, doing good service as a laborer for Christ.

Samuel Burnham: who shall say that he was not, in some real sense, a minister of the Gospel? As an editor of the Congregationalist and Congregational Quarterly, he had a double pulpit, and the readers were his congregation. Who of all the sons of Rindge in the ministry had a greater parish than he?

And last to be mentioned is Elliott S. Cudworth. He was, first, our S. S. Superintendent; then he labored as an evangelist; and now he is doing the work of a pastor in Vermont, having three churches under his care.

Our church organization, for a hundred years, has had her home in this meeting-house. Meanwhile certain agencies for good have sprung up to help her and the society in their work.

The oldest of these agencies was the singing school. We would not be apt to think of the singing school as an agency for the church. But, see how a subscription paper for one reads in 1799:

"A considerable number of young persons having signified a desire to acquaint themselves with the rules of Music, and their assistance being very necessary to render the singing in our Congregation accurate and respectable, we conceive it to be a duty incumbent on us, not only as lovers of order and regularity, but as promoters of Christianity, to contribute for the advancement of this agreeable part of Divine worship. With this view, we the undersigned cheerfully subscribe and promise to pay the sums, which we have affixed to our respective names, to such person or persons as we may hereafter appoint, for the purpose of hiring some person (who is well qualified) to instruct a singing school in this Town the ensuing season."

It was on Feb. 10, 1800, that David Carlton gave a receipt for Thirty-five Dollars paid for his teaching the school referred to in this subscription paper.

David Carlton's school was followed by many others, one being taught by the afterwards eminent Marshall P. Wilder. It

seems that these had a marked effect in improving the music on the Sabbath.

The next agency to be noticed, is that which was organized in 1821, which was then known as the Female Charitable Society, and later as the Ladies' Sewing Circle. The object of this society is "to aid the cause of benevolence by our contributions and needle work." The Ladies' Sewing Circle has had its trials, as one sees who reads its records. There is a minor strain, a kind of lament, expressed here and there, but the major strain of fortitude and courage always triumphs. Dr. Burnham footed up the amount contributed through the Circle in forty years, and found the grand total to be $1,500. During the last thirty years, the amount has been about the same. So, in the seventy-five years of its history, more than $3,000 has been contributed through this channel.

Somewhere in the decade 1820–30, perhaps, the Sabbath School was organized. In 1826, Mrs. Malina Stickney came to Rindge and found no Sabbath School. As soon as there was one, Mrs. Colonel Perry invited her to join and she became one of the original members.

If tradition is correct, the starting of the Sabbath School was due to one who, because of his mental infirmity, was called "poor Eben." It is said that he used to meet with others in the horse sheds, and the talk between them was of such a nature that it led to the formation of a Sabbath School. If that be true, then poor Eben's life was not in vain.

It seems as if it were an ideal place for a small class in the old square pew. The teacher could have his scholars right about him in cosy form, and each class would be like a little family.

I have no results to state concerning the Sabbath School, except to say that it has proved its right to live. The seeds of truth have been sown carefully and prayerfully, and the school has been the nursery of the church. What it needs, is more patronage. Fifty per cent. of the congregation is not sufficient in the school. Why not have from ninety to one hundred per cent.?

Next to give a passing moment's notice to, is the Ladies' Vestry Association, whose quarter centennial was recently celebrated. The L. V. A. had its birth in that great renovation of the meeting-house in 1871. Over a doorway of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, is the epitaph for Sir Christopher Wren, the architect:—"If you seek to know his monument, look around." So, if you seek to know something of what the Ladies' Vestry Association has done, walk through this building and look around. $500 for the carpet, $200 towards the cushions, $200 towards the organ, $275 for the piano, $75 for the kitchen, and $265 for Vestry repairs: these are among the visible objects bearing the impress of the L. V. A. Besides this, the Association has, yearly, lent a generous hand towards paying the current expenses of the parish. In all, it has collected and expended nearly $4,800.

One decade ago, next July, our Christian Endeavor Society was formed, having for its first President the pastor's son, Charles C. Merrill, who will soon be one of Rindge's sons in the regular ministry. This society was attached first to the Contoocook Valley Union, inasmuch as the Contoocook River rises in our town; but now it is connected with the Cheshire County Union. The Rindge Society is one of the largest in the Union. It has had a healthy and systematic growth, and it now has a promising outlook in the matter of effective service for Christ and the Church.

The first W. C. T. U. in Rindge came to an untimely end; but, before it died, it gave birth to another organization, working in a different line, to be sure, but working for the same Master. I find this recorded in July, 1888:—"At a meeting of the W. C. T. U. of this place held at the parsonage today, there was some conversation on the subject of Missions, and a motion was made to form an Auxiliary to the N. H. branch of the Woman's Board of Missions. This motion prevailed and a society was formed." The way to become a member of this Auxiliary is unique. It is simply by taking a Mite Box and depositing its contents into the treasury at the end of the year. At each annual meeting, some fifty dollars are thus secured for

foreign missions, a sufficient sum for the appointment of two life members of the Woman's Board; and this has been done, on an average, every year.

Besides this Senior Auxiliary, there is a Junior Auxiliary, organized in 1894 and known as the "Happy Helpers' Mission Band." The Happy Helpers have been on the alert for ways in which to help, and they have bent to the work with youthful energy and enthusiasm.

Thus this church stands equipped for the Master's service. Under the old home roof which has sheltered her for these hundred years, she looks forth trustingly into the future.

ORIGINAL HYMN FOR 1797.

Supposed to be Written by Mrs. Payson.

Tune: "Hebron."

Blessings unnumbered claim our praise,
Blessings of Nature and of Grace;
For comforts here and hopes above,
Praise to the eternal source of love.

That we have leave to serve the Lord,
To pray, to praise, and read His word,
To hear the Gospel's joyful sound,
Let glory to His name redound.

Free from restraints imposed by men,
From Persecution's hateful reign,
Duty and Love our worship guide,
We walk secure where conscience leads.

We thank thee, Lord, that through our land
Thy sacred temples frequent stand,
Where gracious souls their love proclaim,
And learn the glories of Thy name.

For this fair house unstained with blood,
We thank the bounty of our God.
'Twas He who raised these walls in peace,
And brought the top stone forth with grace.

Here let Thy power and glory shine
Here, Lord, let fellowship divine
Bless the attendants at Thy gate,
Who for Thy holy teachings wait.

To humble souls these blessings yield,
Which Jacob found in Bethel's field.
May they, by gracious visits given,
Own their God's house, the gate of heaven.

Oh! Hasten, Lord, this happy hour,
When all shall feel Thy gracious power,
And the wide world a temple be,
Where all shall join in praising Thee.

ORIGINAL HYMN FOR 1897.

BY MS. MARTHA J. HEYWOOD.

Tune: "Rockingham."

Father of love, beneath whose eye
Each century goes rolling by,
Kept by Thine all sustaining power,
We celebrate this festal hour.

One hundred years have passed away,
Since godly men, that wintry day,
With prayer and voice of melody,
Did dedicate this house to Thee.

This church which Thou hast planted here,
Has shared Thy mercies year by year,
And saintly pastors here have stood,
Who kept the faith and walked with God.

Dear Shepherd, grant Thy grace divine,
To rest upon this fold of Thine;
Here may Thy watchful presence dwell,
And future years Thy goodness tell.

The generations past have shown,
The Lord will ne'er forsake His own;
And they shall still His kindness prove,
Who trust in His unfailing love.

And when at last these earthly lays,
Are changed to strains of endless praise,
To Him the glory shall be given,
Who led us safely home to Heaven.

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